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Our author's recommendation



A green or sustainable option



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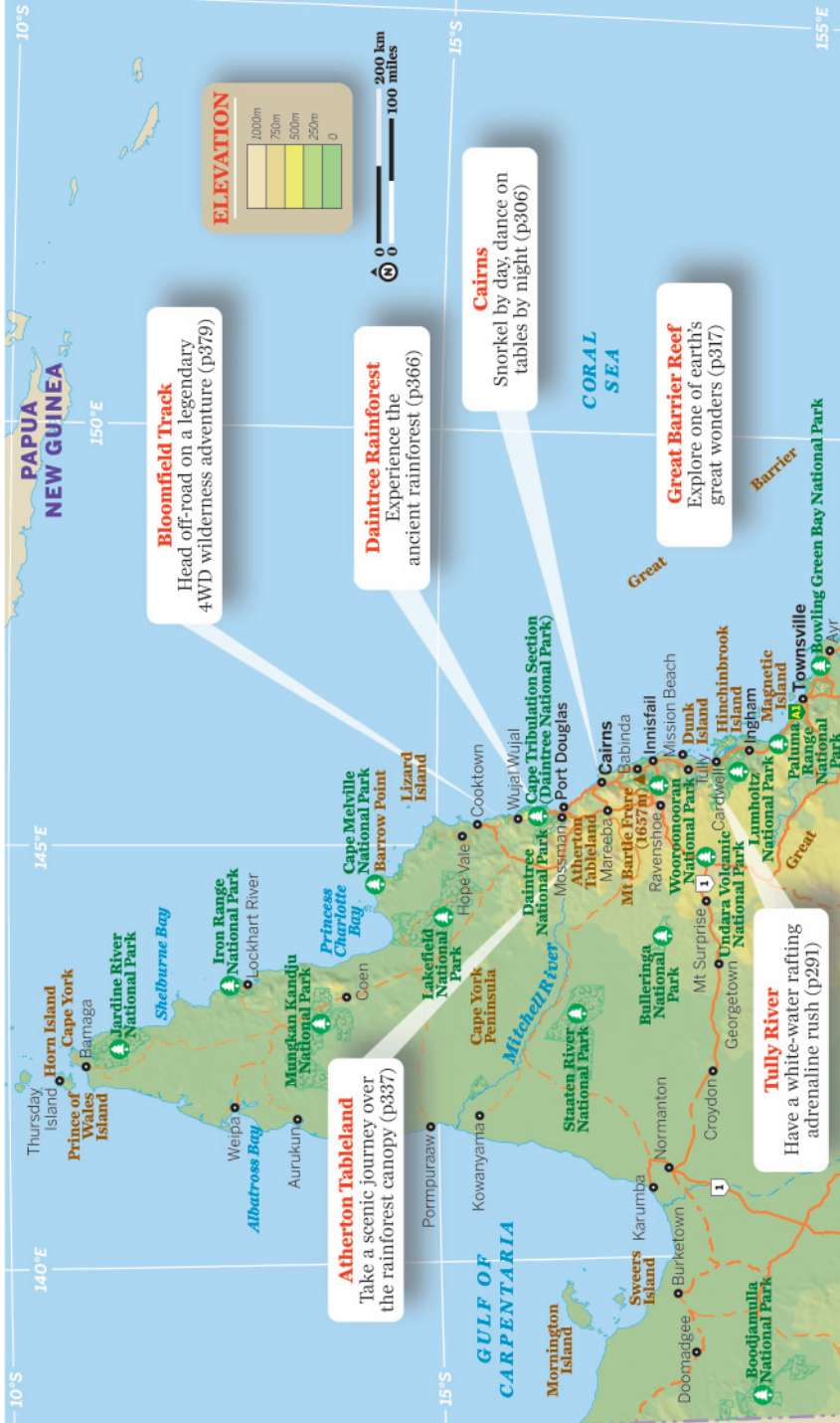
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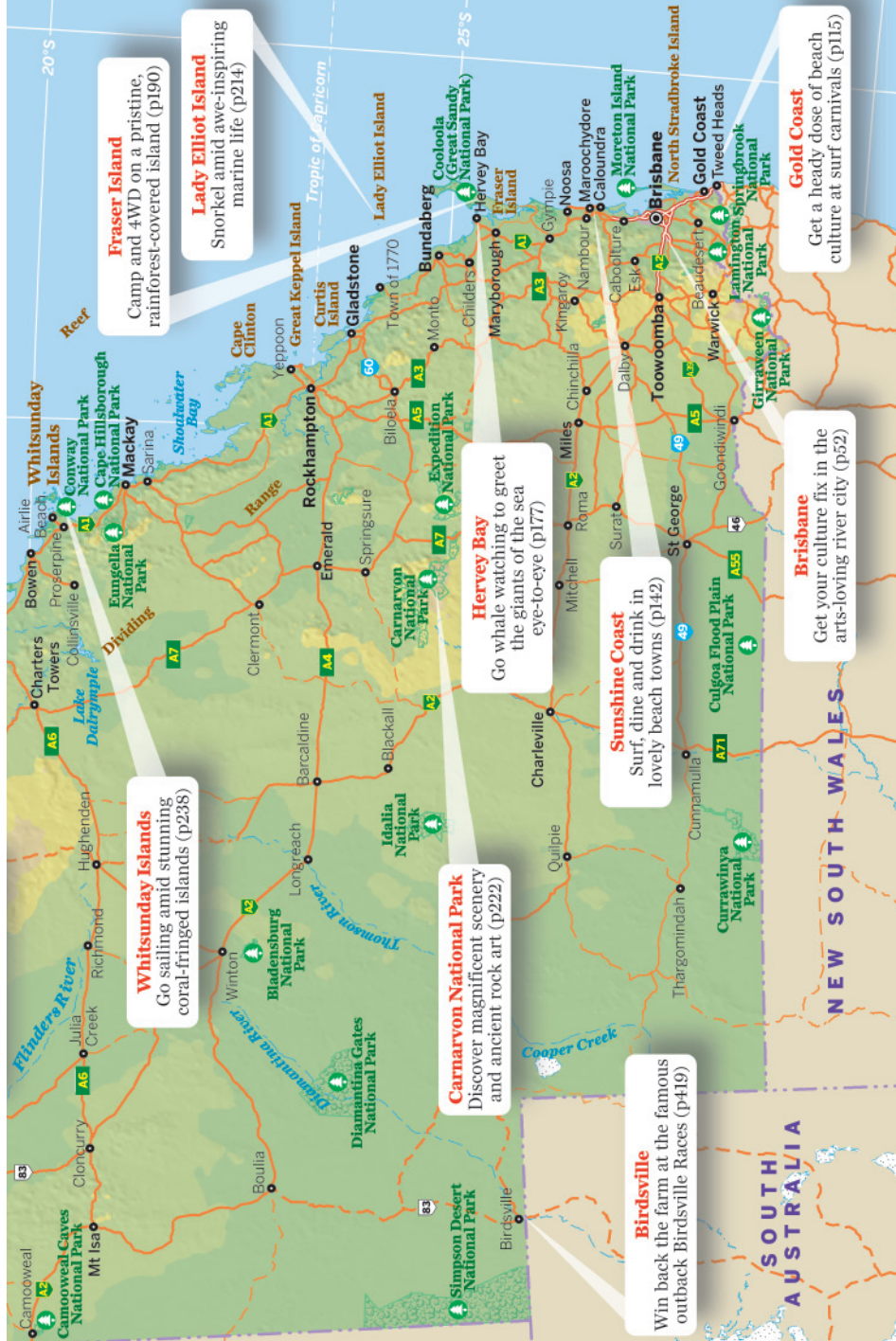
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Queensland & the Great Barrier Reef

Top Experiences >





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Camp and 4WD on a pristine, rainforest-covered island (p190)

Lady Elliot Island
Snorkel amid awe-inspiring marine life (p214)

Whitsunday Islands
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Carnarvon National Park
Discover magnificent scenery and ancient rock art (p222)

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Go whale watching to greet the giants of the sea eye-to-eye (p177)

Sunshine Coast
Surf, dine and drink in lovely beach towns (p142)

Birdsville
Win back the farm at the famous outback Birdsville Races (p419)

Brisbane
Get your culture fix in the arts-loving river city (p52)

Gold Coast
Get a heady dose of beach culture at surf carnivals (p115)

NEW SOUTH WALES

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



10 Days

The Sensational South

Begin in **Brisbane** for a dose of culture, taking in art exhibits, a concert and riverside dining, followed by nightlife in **Fortitude Valley**. After exploring the capital, catch a boat to **North Stradbroke Island** for whale watching, sea kayaking and idyllic beach walks. Back on the mainland, head west to the cool (bring a jacket), scenic **Granite Belt** for wine tasting and bushwalks in national park. Head east to the **Gold Coast**, stopping in laid-back **Coolangatta** before continuing north to the party centre of **Surfers Paradise**. Let loose your inhibitions (and your stomach) at the **Gold Coast Theme Parks**.

After the Gold Coast people parade, continue north to the **Glass House Mountains** for striking panoramas (and rock-climbing for the intrepid). Nearby is the fantastic **Australia Zoo**, which is well worth visiting. Next hit **Mooloolaba**, home to sun, surf and a super-friendly beach vibe; its northern beach neighbour, **Maroochydore**, is also enchanting. Another half-hour north and you reach **Noosa**, a classy resort town with sublime beaches, well-preserved national park (home to sometimes-spotted koalas) and first-class cuisine.



Two Weeks

Rainforest & Reef

Australia's reef-diving capital and gateway to the ancient tropical rainforests to the north, **Cairns** is an obligatory stop on almost any itinerary through Queensland. Spend a few days in the buzzing town, visiting its lush botanic gardens, enjoying good meals and getting a taste of the town's brash nightlife. Take day trips to **Green** and **Fitzroy Islands**, with reef-trimmed shores, verdant vegetation and lovely beaches. Book a snorkelling or dive trip to the **Great Barrier Reef** (ideally the outer reef) or plan a few days on a live-aboard expedition to **Cod Hole**, one of Australia's best dive spots. You can also plan adventure activities like white-water rafting and skydiving.

After a few days in Cairns, head inland via gondola cableway or scenic railway to **Kuranda** for rainforest walks and browsing the popular markets. Spend a few days exploring the region (though you'll need your own wheels), soaking in **Innot Hot Springs**, visiting picturesque **Millaa Millaa falls** and hiking in spectacular **Wooroonooran National Park**.

Head back to the coast and treat yourself to a night in a peaceful resort in lovely **Palm Cove**, just north of Cairns. Continue an hour further north to **Port Douglas**, a peaceful holiday town with a beautiful beach. It's also a base for boat trips to the outer reef with first-rate catamarans heading to **Agincourt Reefs**.

After a few nights eating, drinking and relaxing in Port Douglas, hit the road. The first stop is **Mossman Gorge**, where lush lowland rainforest surrounds the photogenic Mossman River. Sign up for a memorable **Kuku-Yalanji Dreamtime walk**, run by the Indigenous Kuku-Yalanji.

Go north to the **Daintree River**. Take a crocodile-spotting cruise and stop for lunch in the **Daintree Village**. Afterwards, continue back to the river, where you'll cross by vehicle ferry to the northern side. From here drive north (carefully, as this is cassowary country) toward Cape Tribulation. Stop at the **Daintree Discovery Centre** to learn about this magnificent area. The lovely beach at nearby **Cow Bay** is also worth a detour. Continue north, taking a bit of refreshment at the **Daintree Ice Cream Company**. The last stop is **Cape Tribulation**, a magnificent meeting of rainforest and reef. Spend a few nights taking in the splendour at one of the fine lodges tucked in the rainforest.



Two Weeks

Tropic of Capricorn

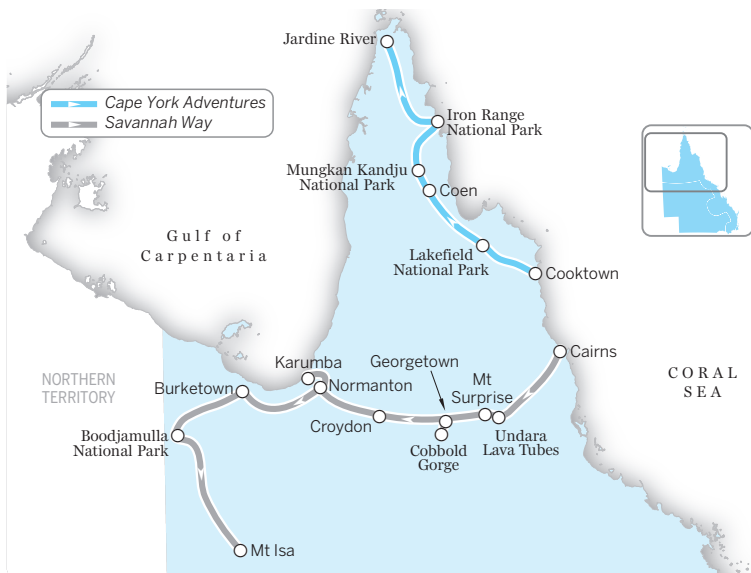
Start the adventure in **Hervey Bay**, a pleasant seaside town with good swimming beaches and superb whale-watching cruises from here in season (July to October). Next, prepare for big adventure (either hiring a 4WD or joining a tour) on **Fraser Island**, home to massive dunes, beach ‘highways’, memorable bushwalks and crystal-clear lakes. After Fraser, head north to **Mon Repos**, where you can see massive loggerhead turtles nesting or new hatchlings dashing into the sea (November to March). The old-fashioned country town of **Bundaberg** is next; don’t miss a tour of the famous **Bundaberg Rum Distillery**. From Bundaberg, catch a flight to **Lady Elliott Island** with magnificent snorkelling and diving amid marine-rich coral gardens. Back on the mainland, go north to **Agnes Water**, a charming town with good surf and white-sand beaches. Refreshed, take the long drive west to **Carnarvon National Park**, with its dramatic gorges and mesmerising Aboriginal rock paintings. The last stop is **Great Keppel Island**, a stunningly beautiful and pristine island with fine beaches and forest-covered hills.

One to Two Weeks

Whitsundays Exploration

Fly to **Airlie Beach**, and indulge in a bit of the town’s youthful nightlife, while researching boats heading out to the **Whitsunday Islands**. A multiday trip is a great option as you can explore remote islands that you and your fellow crew will have to yourself. Make sure your boat’s itinerary includes a stop on **Whitsunday Island** for a memorable swim off stunning **Whitehaven Beach**, one of the prettiest beaches in Australia. After cruising the islands, book a night or two at an island resort. For something more adventurous, you could also sign on for an overnight kayaking trip out to one of the islands.

After Airlie Beach, pack yourself up and continue north around three hours to **Townsville**. Explore the waterfront promenade, visit the superb Reef HQ Aquarium, scale Castle Hill and soak up the fine dining scene. If you’re an experienced diver, book a spot on a boat out to dive the famous **Yongala wreck dive**. End your journey on **Magnetic Island**, an unpretentious island with easygoing beach villages, abundant wildlife and scenic bushwalking tracks.



One to Two Weeks Savannah Way

➤ This route crosses a remote part of northern Queensland to the Gulf of Carpentaria and makes a great add-on to the Rainforest & Reef tour if time allows. Apart from a couple of detours, it's a sealed road, accessible to all vehicles.

From **Cairns**, the first stop is the fascinating **Undara Lava Tubes**, where you can walk through ancient volcanic formations. Continue west through the old mining towns of **Mt Surprise**, **Georgetown** and **Croydon**, but don't miss the detour to dramatic **Cobbold Gorge**, with swimming holes, wildlife and rugged cliffs. Back on the highway, **Normanton** is a good barra fishing town on the Normanton River, but continue another 70km to remote **Karumba** on the Gulf of Carpentaria for unparalleled angling and super sunsets. If you have a 2WD, you can head south on the sealed Matilda Hwy to Cloncurry and then west to Mt Isa. Otherwise, hit the dirt on the Savannah Way west to **Burketown** for the morning glory, then make your way southwest to **Boodjamulla National Park**, where you can canoe in the stunning gorge, camp and explore fossil sites. Continue south on 4WD tracks to the Barkly Hwy and southeast to civilisation at **Mt Isa**, the outback's biggest town.

One to Two Weeks Cape York Adventures

➤ To cover the magnificent, pristine ground from Cooktown to Cape York you'll need a 4WD to get you off the beaten track.

Begin your northern adventure in the fascinating frontier settlement of **Cooktown**. Then head northwest on McIver Rd into Queensland's second-largest national park: isolated **Lakefield National Park**, with rich wildlife and great outdoor activities, including superb barramundi fishing and croc-spotting.

From the north end of the park, head west to the Peninsula Development Rd and drive north 100km to **Coen**, the Cape's 'capital' and gateway to the Rokeby section of **Mungkan Kandju National Park**. Continue another 100km or so and turn east onto Archer Rd to **Iron Range National Park**, Australia's largest conservation area of lowland tropical forest, with spectacular bird life and flora.

To reach the top of the Cape you need to drive the extent of Telegraph Rd (about 200km), which skirts Jardine River National Park. Here you can swim in the gorgeous (croc-free) natural pools at Twin Falls. Once you cross the **Jardine River**, set up camp on the beach at Seisia or Punsand Bay and savour the final leg of the rugged trip to the tip of Australia.

Contributing Authors

[Dr Michael Cathcart](#) wrote the History chapter. Michael teaches history at the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne. He is well known as a broadcaster on ABC Radio National and has presented history programs on ABC TV. His most recent book is *The Water Dreamers* (2009), which details how water has shaped the history of Australia.

[Dr Tim Flannery](#) wrote the Environment chapter. Tim is a scientist, explorer and writer. He has written several award-winning books, including *The Future Eaters*, *Throwim Way Leg* and *The Weather Makers*. He lives in Sydney, where he is a professor in the faculty of science at Macquarie University.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Regis St Louis

Coordinating Author; Brisbane; Around Brisbane Regis' love of Australia has taken him to every corner of the country, exploring remote pockets of the Kimberley, around Tasmania and through the rainforests and tropical islands of Queensland. On his most recent trip, he walked the waterlogged streets of Brisbane during the rainiest spring on record, introduced his daughters to cuddly koalas at Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary and enjoyed a bit of mayhem during the lively Brisbane Festival.

Regis has contributed to more than 30 Lonely Planet titles, including the latest edition of *East Coast Australia*. When not travelling the world, he splits his time between New York City and Sydney.



Sarah Gilbert

Capricorn Coast; Journeys into the Outback Sarah is a Sydneysider who has also made her home in Amsterdam, New York and Buenos Aires. As a writer, she cut her teeth on the Big Apple's tabloids before moving home to work in TV current affairs. Once more based in Sydney, she makes her living both writing and working in TV. She's contributed to several Lonely Planet guides and is writing her first book of literary nonfiction.



Catherine Le Nevez

Townsville to Innisfail; Cairns, Islands & Highlands; Port Douglas & the Daintree; Cape York Peninsula & the Savannah Way Catherine's first writing for Lonely Planet was on Far North Queensland while completing her Doctorate of Creative Arts in Writing, during a 65,000km lap-and-a-half of the continent, including driving through two cyclones. Since then, Catherine has authored or co-authored more than two dozen guidebooks worldwide, including Lonely Planet's *Australia*

and *East Coast Australia* guides – and relived one of those cyclone-pounded drives for a Lonely Planet feature story. She jumped at the chance to return to tropical paradise for this assignment.



Olivia Pozzan

Gold Coast; Noosa & the Sunshine Coast; Fraser Island & the Fraser Coast; Whitsunday Coast; Cape York Peninsula & the Savannah Way Raised in Queensland, Olivia had a sun-soaked beachside upbringing that shaped a lifelong addiction to balmy days and gorgeous beaches. Before her veterinary career led her to the deserts of the Middle East, her bikini collection graced every sandy shore between Cairns and the Gold Coast. After years of travelling the globe, Olivia had a craving

for sand between her toes that finally drew her back to the Sunshine Coast. While revisiting her favourite coastal hot spots for this edition, she fell in love with the beautiful Whitsunday Islands.

OVER MORE
PAGE WRITERS

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